

# NEW GAG AND RED GROUPER MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR GULF OF MEXICO FEDERAL WATERS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*February 2012*



### **What is the status of gag and red grouper populations?**

- Updated population assessments for gag and red grouper were completed in 2009.
- Updated assessments indicated the stock sizes have declined since 2005.
- A large part of the declines were attributed to a mortality event in 2005 (most likely associated with red tide) that resulted in more than 20 percent of the red grouper stock and 18 percent of the gag stock being killed, in addition to fish dying from normal natural and fishing mortalities.
- The decline for red grouper was not sufficient for the stock to be considered overfished (population abundance too low).
- The decline in the gag populations was sufficient for the stock to be considered overfished, and because current fishing rates will not allow the stock to recover quickly enough, gag are also considered to be undergoing overfishing (removal rate too high).

### **Why is a rebuilding plan required for gag?**

- The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires fishery managers to establish a schedule and strategy to rebuild overfished populations.
- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) submitted to NOAA Fisheries Service a rebuilding plan for gag in Amendment 32 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan.

#### **What is a rebuilding plan?**

A rebuilding plan is a strategy used to manage harvest over a specified time period so that an “overfished” stock can increase in size to a legally mandated target level.

## What are the new gag management measures?

- New measures for gag were recently approved in Amendment 32.
- The new measures include:
  - Incrementally increasing the **annual catch limits** and **annual catch targets** through 2015 (Table 1).
  - Setting a four-month recreational season from July 1 through October 31.
  - Incrementally increasing the commercial quota through 2015 (Table 1).
  - Adjusting the commercial quota to 86 percent of the **annual catch target** to account for dead discards.
  - Revising how gag multi-use shares are allocated in the commercial grouper/tilefish individual fishing quota program.
  - Making the grouper/tilefish individual fishing program the commercial **accountability measure**.
  - Revising the recreational **accountability measures** to include an overage adjustment and in-season measures.
    - An overage adjustment is if the **annual catch limit** is exceeded, the amount of the overage is deducted from the following year's **annual catch limit** and **annual catch target**.
    - Gag and red grouper inseason measures are if the **annual catch limit** is exceeded or projected to be exceeded during the fishing year, fishing for that species will be prohibited for the remainder of the year.
- A summary of gag regulations can be viewed in Table 2.

### Definitions

**Annual catch limit** is the highest level of landings that is acceptable to maintain an adequate stock size.

**Annual catch target** is the acceptable level of landings that provide a buffer, if needed, for management uncertainty.

**Accountability measures** are actions taken if the annual catch limit is exceeded

**Table 1.** Gag sector annual catch limits, sector annual targets, and the adjusted commercial quota. Units are in millions of pounds. Sector annual catch limits and annual catch targets are based on allocation ratios determined in Amendment 30B.

Year	Sector annual catch limit		Sector annual catch target		Adjusted commercial quota
	Recreational (61%)	Commercial (39%)	Recreational (61%)	Commercial (39%)	
2012	1.232	0.788	1.031	0.659	0.567
2013	1.495	0.956	1.287	0.823	0.708
2014	1.720	1.100	1.519	0.971	0.835
2015+	1.903	1.217	1.708	1.092	0.939

**Table 2.** Gag and red grouper 2011 and 2012 regulations (mp = million pounds).

RECREATIONAL MANAGEMENT ACTION		2011 Management measures	2012 Management Measures
Gag	Gag fishing season	September 16-November 15	July 1-October 31*
	Gag bag limit	2 gag/person/day in the 4 fish grouper aggregate daily bag limit	No change
	Gag minimum size limit	22" total length	No change
Red Grouper	Red grouper fishing season	January 1-January 31; April 1 – December 31	No change
	Red grouper bag limit	4 red grouper/person/day in the 4 fish grouper aggregate bag limit	No change
	Red grouper minimum size limit	20" total length	No change
COMMERCIAL MANAGEMENT ACTION		2011 Management measures	2012 Management Measures
Gag	Gag quota	0.430 mp	2012 0.567 mp* 2013 0.708 mp 2014 0.835 mp 2015+ 0.939 mp
	Gag minimum size limit	24" total length	22" total length*
Red Grouper	Red grouper quota	2011 5.23 mp 2012 5.37 mp 2013 5.53 mp 2014 5.63 mp 2015+ 5.72 mp	No change
	Red grouper minimum size	18" total length	No change

\*Effective date March x, 2012

### What are the red grouper regulations?

- Red grouper management measures changed November 2, 2011, as a result of a regulatory amendment submitted by the Council.
- The amendment:
  - Increased the 2011 commercial quota (**annual catch target**) and set the commercial quotas for 2011 through 2015 (See Table 3).
  - Set the recreational allocation (**annual catch target**) through 2015 (See Table 3).
  - Increased the recreational red grouper bag limit from two to four fish within the four-fish aggregate grouper bag limit.
- Additionally, some new red grouper management measures were recently approved in Amendment 32.
- These new measures include:
  - Setting the recreational and commercial **annual catch limits** (See Table 3).
  - Revising how red grouper multi-use shares are allocated in the commercial grouper/tilefish individual fishing quota program.
  - Making the grouper/tilefish individual fishing program the commercial **accountability measure**.
  - Revising the recreational **accountability measures** to include an overage adjustment and in-season measures.
- A summary of red grouper regulations can be viewed in Table 2.

**Table 3.** Red grouper sector annual catch limits and annual catch targets. Units are in millions of pounds. Sector annual catch limits and annual catch targets are based on allocation ratios determined in Amendment 30B.

Year	Sector annual catch limit		Sector annual catch target	
	Recreational (24%)	Commercial (76%)	Recreational (24%)	Commercial (76%)
2011	1.90	6.03	1.65	5.23
2012	1.90	6.03	1.70	5.37
2013	1.90	6.03	1.74	5.53
2014	1.90	6.03	1.78	5.63
2015+	1.90	6.03	1.80	5.72

### Related Links:

- 2011 Red grouper regulatory amendment  
([http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/pdfs/2011\\_Final\\_Regulatory\\_Amendment\\_Red%20Grouper.pdf](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/pdfs/2011_Final_Regulatory_Amendment_Red%20Grouper.pdf))
- Amendment 32  
([http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/pdfs/Final\\_RF32\\_EIS\\_October\\_21\\_2011.pdf](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/pdfs/Final_RF32_EIS_October_21_2011.pdf))
- Gulf of Mexico Grouper, Snapper, and Other Reef Fish  
(<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/GrouperSnapperandReefFish.htm>)